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SUBJECT: (U) ASSISTANT SECRETARY BLAKE'S SEPTEMBER 23,
2009 CONVERSATION WITH TAJIK FOREIGN MINISTER HAMROKHOM
ZARIFI

¶1. (U) September 23, 2009; 10:30 a.m.; New York, USA.

¶2. (U) Participants:

U.S.
Assistant Secretary Blake
Matt Lowe, Special Assistant
Don Camp, UNGA Senior Area Adviser
Sarah Prescott (SCA Notetaker)

Tajikistan
Foreign Minister Hamrokhom Zarifi
Lukmon Isomatov, UN Permanent Representative

¶3. (SBU) SUMMARY. Assistant Secretary Blake met Foreign Minister Zarifi for a 20-minute, bilateral meeting on the margins of UNGA on September 23. A/S Blake thanked Foreign Minister Zarifi for a good July visit to Dushanbe, thanked Tajikistan for supporting U.S. efforts in Afghanistan, encouraged the integration of Afghan border guards into Tajik training, invited feedback on the U.S. draft Annual Bilateral Commissions Work Plan, recommended the Government of Tajikistan (GOTI) make public recent audits from the National Bank, Barqi Tojik and Talco Aluminum Plant, requested President Rahmon to accept Ambassador Ken Gross, credentials and requested reinstatement of prison visits for returned Tajik GTMO detainees. In response, Zarifi said he felt the U.S.-Tajik bilateral relations were strong but Tajikistan needed more technical and financial assistance from the U.S. in order to meet our expectations on border security, trafficking in persons and other standards. Zarifi encouraged A/S Blake to think of Tajikistan when senior level USG officials visit the region. END SUMMARY

Annual Bilateral Consultations (ABC)

¶4. (SBU) Foreign Minister Zarifi opened by noting Tajik-US bilateral relations are very strong because we do not have any difficult issues between our countries. Zarifi felt the ABC Work Plan should focus on economics, democracy, regional partnerships and Afghanistan - especially Afghanistan to build stability in the region. Zarifi declared Tajikistan was ready to accept an American delegation or he would be happy to travel to the U.S. to begin the ABC Work Plan discussions.

¶5. (SBU) A/S Blake thanked Zarifi for his initial thoughts on the ABC concept and passed over a copy of our draft ABC Work plan. Quickly glancing at the document, Zarifi said "CASA is very important to Tajikistan and Pakistan." Zarifi said we should expect their response by the first of October. A/S Blake thanked Zarifi and emphasized the faster we can agree to an agenda the faster we can get to work. A/S Blake further suggested that we hold our first meeting in late November or early December. Zarifi noted it would be best if A/S Blake came to Dushanbe for the inaugural ABC meeting,

which Blake said he would be pleased to do.

Please build us a second bridge

¶6. (SBU) Preempting our usual negative response, Zarifi pressed for a second U.S.-funded bridge to Afghanistan noting that a second bridge could help increase the amount of Northern Distribution Network (NDN) traffic through Tajikistan. Zarifi requested the U.S. to urge Uzbekistan to allow more NDN cargo transit across the Nizhny Pyanj Bridge into Afghanistan. By allowing additional NDN routes from Tajikistan, Tajikistan could increase fruit and vegetable exports to Afghanistan. (Comment: Zarifi proudly noted that Tajikistan has the best water and fruit juice in the world.)

Noting the Administration's focus on food security, Blake asked how Tajikistan had sufficient fruits and vegetables to export to Afghanistan? Zarifi said that President Rahmon has doubled the number of crops per year which gave farmers more capacity to grow more food than cotton.

¶7. (SBU) On a related note, Zarifi pointed out that additional investment from the U.S. would accelerate the TIFA Agreement. A/S Blake noted that the TIFA would be a good forum to discuss both regional and bilateral trade opportunities since access to a larger integrated regional

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market would be of interest to U.S. business. He added that increased public transparency would also help, recommending that the GOTI make public recent audits from the National Bank, Barqi Tojik and Talco Aluminum Plant.

Regional Security and Cooperation

¶8. (SBU) Zarifi pointed out that Tajikistan had excellent border guard training programs through the OSCE but more investment was needed to improve this capacity. Zarifi noted that narcotics continued to pour out of Afghanistan thru Tajikistan and Tajikistan needed additional technical assistance to combat narcotics flows. A/S Blake noted that in conversations with Kazakhstan, as the new OSCE Chairman, one of the U.S. suggestions was to focus the OSCE on border security. Zarifi noted they were talking with Kazakhstan on this issue.

Democracy and Trafficking in Persons (TIP)

¶9. (SBU) A/S Blake underscored the importance of having a more detailed discussion on holding a free and fair election in February. Zarifi replied that Tajikistan was working closely with the OSCE and others in preparation for the elections. A/S Blake noted that he would follow up with the U.S. Embassy in Dushanbe to ensure Tajikistan had all of the support they needed.

¶10. (SBU) Zarifi told A/S Blake that Tajikistan had improved its record on preventing trafficking in persons. While Tajikistan is working hard to address U.S. concerns, Tajikistan could make more progress if they received specialized expertise from the U.S. Zarifi noted that without more technical support from the U.S., further Tajik TIP progress would be difficult.

Other Issues

¶11. (SBU) In response to Zarifi's plea for the U.S. senior

officials to visit Tajikistan when in Central Asia, A/S Blake noted that through the TIFA, ABCs and other bilateral forums, there would be opportunities for senior U.S. officials to visit Tajikistan. On Ambassador Gross, credentials, Zarifi said he had already met with the President and this would happen soon after the President,s return from UNGA. On visiting Tajik-GTMO detainees, A/S Blake noted that in 2008 Tajikistan had allowed the U.S. prison visits of the two Tajik-GTMO detainees but in 2009 we were not given access. He asked that the Ministry of Foreign Affairs speak with the Ministry of Justice to remedy this. Zarifi assured Blake that prison visits to former GTMO detainees would not be a problem.

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